



## CASTLE BROMWICH – ITS HISTORY

(Jerry Dutton, North Arden Local History Society, December 2006)

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CASTLE BROMWICH, in common with many English villages, originated in the prehistoric period. It is set in an area of sand and gravel over keuper marl overlooking the valley of the River Tame. Archaeology in advance of the construction of the M6 Motorway in 1969 established that there were settlement traces dating occupancy to both the Neolithic and Bronze Ages with some evidence of Romano British settlement as well.



The earliest place name traced is 'BRAMEWIC' – a "settlement in the broom", the 'Castle' was a later addition to distinguish us from other 'Bromwich's' in the midlands. This castle was a Norman Motte and Bailey Timber Castle overlooking the crossing of the Chester Road and the River Tame. It is possible that this may have been established during the civil wars of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century in King Stephen's reign.

FIG 1: Castle Bromwich 'Castle' (Remains of)  
- A Grade 1 Listed Monument

The Parish Church of St Mary and St Margaret dates from 1726 but is unique in that this 18<sup>th</sup> Century brick structure incorporates a much earlier medieval timber framed original. A Chapel is first recorded in Castle Bromwich in 1165. The church is currently listed as one of only 8 churches in the midlands of outstanding historic and architectural merit. The civil parish dates from 1894 and prior to this was part of the old 'Aston Manor', which in turn came within the greater manor of Bordesley – medieval rents being paid to the Lord of Dudley Castle!



FIG 2: St Mary and St Margaret's  
Parish Church – Grade A Listed.



FIG 3: Castle Bromwich Hall, Grade 2 Listed and the  
hub of our Conservation Zone,

The 'Manorial Descent' of Castle Bromwich has been published elsewhere\* and is too complex to summarise here. Sir Edward Devereux, a member of Ferrers Family, built Castle Bromwich Hall at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century; his brother was the 10<sup>th</sup> Lord Ferrers, and second Viscount Hereford who was also created first Earl of Essex. In 1657 Edward Devereux's descendants sold the manor to the Bridgeman Family in whose hands it has remained to the present, although, at the time of writing, the Hall is up for sale and has not been owned by the family for several years. The Bridgeman's were granted the Earldom of Bradford in 1815.

Within the Castle Bromwich area was the separate manor of Park Hall that was held by the Arden Family who could trace their descent back into the Saxon period. William Shakespeare's maternal great great grandfather Walter Arden was born in the medieval moated hall that once existed on land now occupied by Faircroft Road on the Parkfields estate.

Historically the 'Parish' covered a much larger acreage; it was confined to the north and south by the Rivers Tame and Cole, to the west between 'Bromford' and Stechford the boundary with Ward End was formed by 'Old Bromford Lane' whilst on the east we shared a common boundary with the original (medieval) Coleshill Parish. The housing needs of the ever-expanding Birmingham caused the changes: The Hodge Hill area was sold in the 1930's, Shard End in 1947 and Chelmsley Wood/Smiths Wood in the 1970's!

Throughout its history, in fact right up to the 1970's, Castle Bromwich remained very much a rural community with its economy based on agriculture. Even today there is no industrial development and it is now a 'dormitory' housing area where the majority of the residents work in the larger conurbations of Birmingham, Coventry, Solihull and elsewhere.

(VCH Warks 1947: Castle Bromwich 1066 to 1700 - NALHS 2000)

The *North Arden Local History Society* (founded in 1974) meets in Arden Hall on the second Thursday of each month (except August) at 7.45 pm for 8.00 pm. Contact Mrs Sheila Titcombe (Secretary) for more information - 0121 603 7791 email <sheila.titcombe@blueyonder.co.uk>



FIG 4: The 17<sup>th</sup> Century Park Hall, home of the Arden Family set in the Tame Valley. It is possible that it was visited by William Shakespeare. It had to be demolished in 1970.